

Family Workbook

Raising the Self-Determined Child

SELF-DETERMINATION IS THE ABILITY FOR PEOPLE TO:

- *Make things happen in their lives*
- *Set and reach goals*
- *Take part fully in the world around them*

The right to self-determination includes individuals with ***all types of disabilities***.

Source: *Center on Self-Determination, Oregon Institute on Disability*

Workbook Introduction

Often people think that if a person has a disability someone else will always need to be in charge and make decisions for them. However, even children with disabilities can be taught the skills they need to make the important things happen in their lives, starting at a very young age and developing over time. Those skills include: choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving and goal-setting.

Every parent wants his or her child to lead a happy and productive life. You can help your child learn to set his/her own goals and live a more self-determined life. Research shows that teaching self-determination skills to children and youth results in better adult outcomes such as higher levels of employment and community participation.

This workbook helps you think about your own experiences developing self-determination and to plan for ways you can help your child become more self-determined.

Introduction (continued):

Growing up in your family, how were you encouraged/discouraged from being in charge of your own life?

What do you think are some commonly held beliefs about self-determination and individuals who have disabilities?

SELF-DETERMINATION SKILL: CHOICE MAKING

Providing opportunities for a person with a disability to make meaningful choices that impact his/her daily life is the first step towards self-determination.

List all the choices that you made today from the time you got up until you left your home.

What was the most important choice for you?

What if someone else made a different choice for you – how would you feel?

What choices does your family member make in his/her morning routine? Do you listen and honor their choices? (They may not always express choice in words and listening may not always be easy.)

List three new opportunities for choice-making you can provide your family member in the course of their day:

1.

2.

3.

SELF-DETERMINATION SKILL: DECISION MAKING

Decision-making involves knowing about the options available, weighing the consequences of each option and deciding your action.

What Was the first big decision you made in your life?

How did you arrive at that decision?

How were you supported/ who helped you?

What was the outcome?

What decisions does your family member currently make?

List three ways you can support your family member to make (or participate more fully in) the next important decision that affects them:

1.

2.

3.

SELF-DETERMINATION SKILL: PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem-solving involves responding to challenges and creating solutions. It is the basis for all learning and allows people to have control and feel more capable and independent.

Think about a recent problem you had to solve? Describe the problem.

How did you approach it?

What was the outcome? How did you feel?

What small (or large) problem do you think your family member would like to work on? Ask them. You can make suggestions, but listen to them as well.

List three ways you can support him/her to solve a problem:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SELF-DETERMINATION SKILL: GOAL SETTING

Learning how to set goals creates structure – a roadmap to get from where you are now to where you want to be in the future.

Growing up, what were some of the goals that you set for yourself?

How did you go about achieving those goals?

Did your family have the same goals for you or different ones?

What is a goal that your family member is currently working on (or would like to work on) at home?

Help your family member to keep their goals **SMART**:

Specific and simple -- If it is complicated, help break it down into simple steps

Measurable -- It is clear when they have met the goal (or the small step)

Attainable -- It is something they are likely to be able to do or learn to do

Relevant -- Reaching this goal is important to them and will make a difference

Time-bound -- There is a target date to reach the goal or make adjustments

GOAL SETTING CONTINUED...

To help your family member to set and achieve his goals, try guiding him/her through the 12 steps of the Self-Determination Learning Model:

PHASE 1 – Set a Goal

1. What do I want to learn or be able to do?
2. What do I know about it now?
3. What must change for me to learn what I don't know or do what I haven't done?
4. What can I do to make this change happen?

PHASE 2 – Take Action

5. What can I do to learn what I don't know (or do what I haven't done)?
6. What could keep me from taking action?
7. What could I do to remove these barriers (the things that stop me)?
8. When will I take action?

PHASE 3 – Adjust Goal or Plan

9. What actions have I taken?
10. What barriers or problems have been removed?
11. What has changed about what I know or am able to do?
12. Have I met my goal?

Adapted from: "Self-Determined Learning Model for Early Elementary Students – A Parent's Guide", Beach Center on Disabilities, Susan Palmer and Michael Wehmeyer, 2002. Available on line at -

http://www.beachcenter.org/resource_library/beach_resource_detail_page.aspx?intResourceID=2505&Type_book

REMEMBER!

- **Start small and build over time.**
- **Stop and think in everyday situations – is this an opportunity to teach a skill of self-determination?**
- **Individuals who live with a disability often see their own potential through the vision of their families– set high expectations!**

For additional resources on self-determination, visit the Sherlock Center website at www.sherlockcenter.org